

Zimbabwe: “set apart for the mission”

With a population of over 13 million, southern Africa’s Republic of Zimbabwe—formerly Rhodesia—received independence from the UK in 1980 after a civil war. The country’s current economic problems include a shortage of foreign exchange, soaring inflation and shortages of basic commodities. Health is the most gripping problem as much of the population live with HIV/AIDS. The United Nations World Health Organization records life expectancy for men at 37 years and for women at 34 years, the lowest in the world as of 2006 figures.

Because of the economic issues and repressive politics, high numbers of refugees have fled to neighboring countries—an estimated 3.4 million, or roughly a quarter of the population, had fled by mid 2007. Close to 600,000 other people are displaced within the country, many living in camps with limited assistance, after evictions and violent farm seizures left people homeless. Human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have accused the Zimbabwe government of violating rights to shelter, food, freedom of movement and residence, freedom of assembly and the protection of the law.

The Salvation Army was established in this area in 1891. Today the Zimbabwe Territory ranks among the largest Army territories in the world. Currently 401 corps are open, with an additional 214 societies and 179 outposts developing into corps status. The Army operates four boarding schools, 14 secondary schools, 34 primary schools, 51 preschools, and seven vocational training centers. Two Army-run community hospitals serve people living in rural areas, both with training schools for nurses and midwives. Additionally, the Army runs four social institutions that shelter and serve the elderly, women, and men.

This year’s theme for the Army in Zimbabwe is “Set apart for the mission.” The vision statement is “to be an evangelically focused, spiritually mature, caring, efficient and self-reliant territory.”

From the Zimbabwe Territory’s website: www.salvationarmyzim.org

